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PAKISTAN: [The drift toward division into two independent countries continues.]

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[Redacted]
[Redacted] East Pakistan's Awami League [Redacted] wants to limit central government responsibilities to defense and foreign affairs and to give provincial governments all taxing power. The party has given every indication that it plans to use its majority to force through its program when the constituent assembly meets on 3 March to begin drafting a constitution.]

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[Redacted]
Rejection of the League's constitution and the extension of military rule might well have the acquiescence of the largest West Pakistani party, but East Pakistanis would react strongly, possibly even to the point of proclaiming their independence.]

[Yahya must be aware of this risk and of the extreme difficulty of holding Pakistan together by force. He and the generals may be willing to let the East go, however, to avoid having the entire nation subjected to what they believe would be a dangerous and unworkable governmental system, which would threaten the position of the military.]

[The situation could still be saved by a compromise between East and West Pakistani politicians, but their public statements in the past week give little hope of this. Mujibur Rahman, leader of the Awami League, has reiterated his unwillingness to compromise on provincial autonomy. Z. A. Bhutto, major political leader in West Pakistan, has emphasized that his decision to boycott the constituent assembly unless Mujib is willing to negotiate remains "unshakeable and irrevocable."]

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COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA: [Leading Colombian officials are concerned over the deterioration of relations with Venezuela.]

[Last Thursday, Colombia's ambassador to Venezuela, Hector Charry, on his own initiative asked for US assistance in solving the problem before it led to a clash or to the fall of both governments through military coups. He expressed pessimism over the ability of the two governments to control the situation.]

[On the same day former President Alberto Lleras Camargo and the head of the Colombian team that is negotiating with Venezuela over the delineation of disputed seabeds told US officials in Bogota that the dispute is increasingly serious and that an untoward incident could touch off an armed conflict. They claimed that Venezuela has taken a tougher negotiating position that is completely unacceptable to Colombia. The two leaders were not sanguine about talks scheduled for March but hoped that an agreement might be worked out which would postpone a solution indefinitely. Both stated that the basic underlying factor in the dispute is the probability that the sea area is rich in oil and they expressed fear that political pressures in Venezuela on the issue could lead to a military coup.]

[A coup in either country does not seem likely at present but the doubts expressed by the Colombian officials demonstrate their nervousness and pessimism over present relations. The ability of the two countries to control nationalistic military, economic, and political pressures is a serious problem; both sides have strengthened their armed forces in the border area, increasing the possibility of an incident.]

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